1609/3764

# AN ENQUIRY

INTO THE

# FEASIBILITY

OF THE

# SUPPOSED EXPEDITION

OF

# BUONAPARTE TO THE EAST.

*Quid Craſſos, quid Pompeios evertit, & illum,*
*Ad ſua qui domitos deduxit flagra Quirites?*

JUV.

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BY A TRAVELLER.

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AN

# ENQUIRY, &c.

AT a ſeaſon when the deſtiny of Buonaparté continues to be involved in obſcurity, it may prove neither uninſtructive nor unentertaining to enquire, how far his boaſted invaſion of India, whether deduced from the experience of former, or the conviction of latter ages, is reconcileable to reaſon. If it tend to diſpel the credulity of the ignorant, and the fears of the better informed part of the community, ſuch a diſquiſition will not miſs of its intended effect; though the watchful genius of the Britiſh Navy ſhould nip, in their bud, the unbounded views of this vain-glorious warrior.

That the name of Buonaparté has given a credit and celebrity to this expedition, which it did not deſerve, no doubt can ariſe in the mind of an obſerver: And

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though his diſcomfiture in the Mediterranean ſhould withdraw the glare, which his talents and fortune have thrown around a chimerical project, it may not be unuſeful to detect the deception, which the republican ſyſtem of France has ſedulouſly propagated, to depreſs the funds, and alarm the monied intereſt of her powerful competitor.

Were I ſolemnly called on to anſwer the queſtion, to what degree our Oriental poſſeſſions are threatened by this expedition, I ſhould be inclined to diſpute its direction to that quarter. In the ſeizure of Malta and ſome of the Greek iſlands, as ſtations for the French fleet, and in the plunder of Smyrna and Conſtantinople, if the foundation of a new dynaſty in Egypt limit not his cruize, its objects are probably compriſed. In epiſtolary compoſition his vanity and preſumption have not often been equalled; but that he ſhould ſeriouſly attempt to put in practice, what his blind admirers or envious rivals have ſuggeſted, would be to rank him with the anchoret leader of the Cruſade, or the errant hero of Cervantes.

Buonaparté

Buonaparté is not yet mad enough for ſuch ſociety; however adapted his reſpect for the laws of nations may prove to a marauding and piratical enterprize; ſuch, as might ſuit the morality of a Barbaroſſa, or the approbation of regenerated France!

In order to afford grounds for this enquiry, I ſhall concede, what I have ſo much reaſon to doubt, that the object of Buonaparté's expedition is ſuch as has been ſtated; and that three routes preſent themſelves, of one of which he is reſolved to profit. In the next place I ſhall conſider which is the moſt feaſible; and, allowing him every chance for the attainment of his object, accompanying him, ſtep by ſtep, through the different routes of Suez, Buſrah and Iſpahan; and endeavour to account for his certain failure in whichever he may adopt.

On the capture of Malta, fluſhed with ſucceſs, and recruited with treaſure and ammunition, if we are to believe report, he bent his courſe to Egypt. Thither, if fated once more to elude the active purſuit of the gallant NELSON, let us follow, and conduct him to the harbour of Alex-

andria. We ſhall paſs over the inſufficiency of this port to contain a fleet, capable of carrying 40,000 men, allowing that the Grand Signior, out of fear or affection, has given orders to admit them into the Turkiſh haven, as well as the undefended road, where foreign veſſels are obliged to lie. We ſhall ſuppoſe that proviſions have been collected to feed this large force, while it remains in this deſolated city; and on its march to the Nile, (for no craft larger than boats can paſs over its bar) which is at leaſt two days diſtant. Let

> " The march begin in military ſtate,
> And nations, on his nod, ſuſpended wait"

and, on his arrival at Roſetto, a romantic town near the mouth of the Nile, let a ſufficient number of boats, if the river can ſupply them, be found ready to tranſport Buonaparté and his army, artillery, &c. &c. to Grand Cairo. By the terror of his name let his paſſage up the ſtream be peaceably effected; let his avenging ſword and implacable fury, be reſerved for his enemies in the Eaſt; and let his entrance into Cairo be celebrated with ſongs and rejoicings. Let

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the Pacha and the Beys unite to forward his views, and ſummon their *navy* to Suez, to waft the conqueror of the Alps to the ſhores of Indoſtan. Let all theſe events combine to enſure his ſucceſs, and then let us enquire

" On what foundations ſtands the warriors pride."

From the ſplendid deluſion with which former triumphs and anticipated victories have decorated this picture, let us view it through the medium of diſpaſſionate truth. The Iſthmus of Suez is doomed to be the boundary of this vaunted expedition on that ſide, until Egypt ſhall poſſeſs ſhipping in the Red Sea, of tonnage equal to the tranſportation of ſuch an army, and manned with ſeamen, ſkillful enough to navigate the Indian Ocean! The deſpicable craft that frequent her ports, if we except a few annual ſhips from the Britiſh ſettlements in India, being either undecked or unmanageable; framed merely to thread the ſhallows on the Arabian coaſt, and unable to explore the open ſea. And even with ample means of this nature in his hands, the enterpriſe muſt be carried by a *coup de main*, before the government

vernment of Bombay could be appriſed of the danger, or ſend her marine, competent without his Majeſty's ſhips to intercept and deſtroy the largeſt tranſports---to the Straits of Babelmandel. If, on the other hand, it could be judged poſſible for the iſles of France or the ports of Tippo Sultan, to furniſh ſufficient tonnage for the purpoſe, and to thoſe in the ſecret ſuch an idea is abſurd---What would be the reſult? The preparations for ſuch an enterpriſe could not be concealed from the vigilance of the Britiſh commanders; and, from a fleet of twelve ſail of the line and as many frigates, that are ſtationed between the Cape of Good Hope and the Ganges, there is little doubt but an adequate force would be detached, to counteract the deſigns of the enemy. And this is on the ſuppoſition, that timely intelligence could not be ſent by land or ſea, of the impending danger. In either caſe this poſition muſt be eſtabliſhed, that while Great-Britain is maſter of the ſea, an invaſion of India by way of Suez, is phyſically out of the queſtion.

As we have diſpoſed of the firſt route, and we truſt, to the ſatisfaction of our readers

readers, let us proceed to the ſecond, which to my idea, is to the port of Scanderoon, and by Aleppo and the Great Deſert to the Gulf of Perſia. I cannot deny that an eaſier road preſents itſelf, by the Little Deſert and the Tygris; but when I know, from experience, that boats could not be procured at Bagdat for the conveyance of a hundreth part of his immenſe army to Buſrah, I would not willingly betray the ardor of Buonaparté into the labyrinth, which his advocates have prepared for him.

To this route far ſtronger objections may be produced, than to that by Egypt. Without its aquatic advantages, it is pregnant with every difficulty and danger, that a progreſs through deſart lands and hoſtile tribes, is likely to entail. Travellers are accuſtomed to paſs theſe ſolitudes in caravans, where great attention is paid to the proportioning the journies to the quantity of water at the halting places. The probable bane of this army would be thirſt, which could not be extinguiſhed. For, allowing that the Arab tribes fled at its approach, that the French conqueror and the *Samiel* were held equally deſtructive to life, what chance would his followers

lowers have to eſcape the perils of the waſte, when the wells at the various ſtages would not ſuffice to ſupply a draught to each ſoldier, much leſs to repleniſh his ſkins for the ſucceeding day? But as it is fair and not hazardous, to make conceſſions on this ſubject, let us admit of their paſſing the deſart in ſafety, and at the end of three months---which, conſidering a diſtance of 1000 miles, could not be traverſed on ſuch a ſoil and in ſuch a climate in leſs time---rendering themſelves maſters of Buſrah, which could not reſiſt them. This invincible army muſt here find a barrier to its progreſs! The mountainous coaſt of Perſia, preſents an inſurmountable tract of near 2000 miles to the Ganges; and though the obſtacles which the want of tranſports occaſioned at Suez, recur not to the ſame extent, at the more frequented port of Buſrah, to defeat the enterprize, the greater length of journey, the time afforded to betray it, and the vicinity of the Bombay marine to block up the gulf of Perſia, turn the ſcale conſiderably in favour of the former route.

It might however prove a ſalvo to the judgment of Buonaparté's admirers, that if he

he failed in this route, his diſappointment would be countenanced by that of two celebrated characters of antiquity. Craſſus the triumvir, made but a ſhort progreſs into Meſopatamia at the head of the Roman legions, when he was defeated and put to death by the Parthians. The Emperor Julian, with the advantage of a fleet of gallies pervading the deſart, which

> " —— ſaw the hero paſs in warlike pride,
> While hoſtile navies ſwell'd Euphrates' tide."

was deſtined to meet as calamitous a fate, nearly on the borders of Perſia! We would not wiſh to deprive them of ſuch a conſolation. The fact only ſerves to confirm the difficulty of an enterprize, where, in their very outſet, the Roman eagles were arreſted on the wing.

It now remains for us to trace the laſt, and, if his genius be ſuch as the world conceives, the very road which would be preferred by Buonaparté, were he bent on the undertaking which is the ſubject of this enquiry. I mean Alexander's route from Phœnicia to the Indus. The laurel of Ammon, in his own conceit, would be admirably ſuited to the *Corſican*'s brow; and, however his

his ambition might be wounded by the event, there is no common diſtinction in the emulation, that impels to great actions, and graſps at immortal fame.

The march of Alexander the Great to overturn the Perſian empire, is too familar to the reader to require elucidation. The outlines have been given us by Plutarch, and the accurate hiſtorian of the Macedonian hero, has filled up the ſketch. Thus far however, it is neceſſary to obſerve, to account for the comparative facility with which he tranſported his army acroſs the deſart which lies between Phœnicia and the Euphrates, to what he would have experienced in modern times. A ſignal revolution muſt have happened in the face of that country, which contained the city of Palmyra, and, under the heroic Zenobia, bid defiance to the Roman power: a country, that is at preſent depopulated and waſte; and unable to afford ſuſtenance or ſhelter to the wandering tribes of Arabs that infeſt it.

As we have granted ſo much to the advocates of this expedition in the former caſes, it would be ungenerous to debar them of the ſame indulgence in the preſent. We

mean

mean not therefore to diſpute the good fortune of Alexander's ſucceſſor, and will admit, that with equal ſucceſs he may plant his ſtandard on the banks of the Indus. The Euphrates and the Tygris ſhall be paſſed; the Perſian territories over-run, and another Porus ſubmit to the influence of the tri-coloured flag! Is this exploit to be the end of his difficulties; the goal of his enterpriſes? A region, of nearly twice the extent of what he had already paſſed, would preſent itſelf to the ardor of Buonoparté; and warlike nations, to whom his victories and country are alike unknown---the Afghans, the Seiks, and other independant hordes, who occupy the immenſe interval, would unite to harraſs his march, cut off his proviſions, and intercept his retreat! Should a fragment of his numbers be fortunate enough to reach the Ganges, the navigation and banks of that river would turn out to be in the poſſeſſion of the Engliſh, almoſt from the Imperial city of Delhi to the Bay of Bengal. " But his direction is to the Peninſula---all this ardour of enterpriſe, this waſte of the human ſpecies, has been exerciſed to effect a junction with the tyrant

of

of Myſore! with Tippo Sultan, whoſe territories lie ſtill at the diſtance of a thouſand miles!" Lucky deluſion! that would divert the effort of the implacable foe of Great-Britain to his own deſtruction.—— Happy ambition! that would lead Buonaparté to exhauſt the reſources, and break the ſpirit of his nation, in fruitleſs undertakings, and viſionary conqueſts, when he might have continued formidable in his proper ſphere; and neither incurred the danger of combating the numerous forces of the Mahratta ſtates, nor ſinking under a policy that holds the balance of power in Indoſtan!

In this ſtatement of the various obſtacles and multiplied perils, which interpoſe between the outſet and attainment of this expedition, I have hitherto purpoſely overlooked the impregnable forts, and the formidable armies of the Eaſt-India Company, who guard, with jealous care, the reputation of the Britiſh empire in the Eaſt. An army, which conſiſts of upwards of 100,000 diſciplined men, Europeans and Natives; who, under the military talents of a Cornwallis, humbled the pride and circumſcribed the power of the greateſt warrior

rior of Indoſtan, Tippoo Sultan; and, with equal zeal and facility, would defeat the mad deſigns, and puniſh the perfidy of his boaſted allies, the French republicans, with Buonaparté at their head. When it is further conſidered, that ſuch an alliance promiſes neither co-operation nor ſtability---that the Mahometan deſpot, who betrayed his jealouſy of his French co-adjutors, and drove them, with ignominy, from his camp at Mangulore in the year 1783, can neither enter with cordiality into the views nor countenance the irruption of 40,000 republicans into India, we may conclude, with the elegant ſatiriſt, that Buonaparte's expedition, whatever form it may aſſume, would be ſimilar to that of Charles the Twelfth into Ruſſia,

> "And *leave* a name, at which the world grew pale,
> To point a moral, or adorn a tale."

To the query ſo often put, reſpecting the poſſible tendency of the Toulon armament, and the inconſiſtency of the French Directory, in depriving their country of the ſervices of a man, who has proved himſelf to be alone calculated for the preſent criſis of her affairs, I ſhall briefly refer the reader

to

to my forgoing conjectures on its object; and content myſelf with the belief, that a little reflection will convince him, how very dangerous a great man may be held in a government, ſo conſtituted as that of France; and how readily his talents may be diſpenſed with by uſurpers, jealous of his influence and apprehenſive of his deſigns. Though the firſt of her generals, and the flower of her troops, might be abſolutely neceſſary to maintain her footing on the Rhine againſt a new coalition, how ſmall a ſacrifice would the honor and intereſt of the nation prove to an infernal junto, who may boaſt, with their archetype,

" A mind, not to be chang'd by place or time."

Dublin, 15 July, 1798.

☞ When Tippoo learnt from the commander of the French troops, Monſ. De Coſigné, that a peace was concluded between the French and Engliſh nations, which would oblige him to withdraw from the camp, the Sultan in a paroxiſm of rage at firſt refuſed to permit of their departure; and, when he found the Frenchman determined, ſent a body of horſe forward, to deſtroy the country through which the road lay to the ſea. Diſtreſs and danger of every kind was the conſequence; and Monſ. De Coſigné's detachment arrived at the Engliſh factory of Tillicherry in a famiſhed and deſperate condition, where the hoſpitality of their late enemies was fully exerciſed, to remedy the effects of the barbarity of their perfidious ally!

*Nar. of the Chevalier Benaron.*